



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

8 INDIVIDUALS AND 2 FIRMS CHARGED FOLLOWING ICE INVESTIGATION INTO AIRPORT FRAUD SCHEME IN TRINIDAD

MIAMI- R. Alexander Acosta, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, and Jesus Torres, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), announced today that on Nov. 17, 2005, a federal grand jury in Miami, Florida returned an Indictment charging eight individuals and two companies in connection with a fraudulent scheme to manipulate the bid process for the construction of the Piarco International Airport in Trinidad.

Three of the eight individual defendants were arrested today and made initial appearances in federal court in Miami. Trial will be held before United States District Judge Paul C. Huck. No trial date has been set yet.

According to the Indictment, eight of the defendants conspired to engage in wire fraud by rigging the bid process to secure construction contracts for the Piarco International Airport. On two different occasions, the defendants arranged for a shadow bidder to submit a fraudulent and overinflated bid for one of the airport's construction projects to make their own inflated bid appear reasonable by comparison. On both occasions, the defendants' inflated bids were accepted.

Charged in the wire fraud conspiracy were defendants Raul J Gutierrez, Rene Diaz de Villegas, Eduardo Hillman-Waller, and Armando Paz, all of South Florida, and Steve Ferguson and Ishwar Galbaransingh, both of Trinidad. Also charged were Calmaquip Engineering Corporation, a Miami-based corporation that supplies specialty equipment needed to operate airports, hospitals and office buildings, and Northern Construction Limited, a Trinidad and Tobago construction company.

In addition, the Indictment charges seven of the defendants with conspiring to launder money received as a result of the fraud. According to the charges in the Indictment, the defendants participated in transferring money paid by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to Calmaquip Engineering Corporation through a series of complex financial transactions designed to conceal the origin of the fraudulently obtained funds. Charged in the money laundering conspiracy were Calmaquip Engineering Corporation, Raul J. Gutierrez, Armando Paz, Steve Ferguson, and Ishwar Galbaransingh, as well as defendants Richard Lacle, of Aruba, and Leonardo Arturo Mora-Rodriguez, of Colombia.

If convicted, each individual defendant faces a maximum sentence of 5 years' imprisonment on the wire fraud conspiracy charge and a maximum sentence of 20 years' imprisonment on the money laundering conspiracy charge. The two corporations face a maximum fine of \$30,000,000.

Mr. Acosta commended the investigative efforts of ICE. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Richard Gregorie and Matthew Axelrod.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.